

VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHLB #1963/01 1661431
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
O 151431Z JUN 06
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4080
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

S E C R E T BEIRUT 001963

SIPDIS

SIPDIS
NOFORN

NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/SINGH/WERNER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/15/2026
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KCRM](#) [PGOV](#) [LE](#) [SY](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: MGLE01: POTENTIAL REQUEST TO UNIIIC TO EXAMINE
ALLEGATIONS OF ISRAELI INVOLVEMENT IN MAJZOUB KILLINGS

Classified By: Jeffrey Feltman, Ambassador, per 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

1. (S/NF) Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Elias Murr claimed that the evidence is "very strong" that Israel, using local agents, was behind the 5/26 car bombing that killed the Majzoub brothers (PIJ activists and Lebanese citizens) in Sidon. Murr described what he believes was a sophisticated, widespread Israeli targetting effort using high tech methods (that, frankly, struck us as a bit too James Bond-like). He believes that the two witnesses now in custody will lead to the discovery of more Israeli-hatched plots, including regarding assassinations that took place years ago. Lamenting that Israel seemed to be helping Hizballah, Murr argued that the Majzoub killings reinforced the arguments that Lebanon needs a "resistance." Murr expressed particular worry that the GOL would be forced by Hizballah and the pro-Syrians to ask the UNIIIC for technical assistance in examining the Majzoub deaths. This risked making some or all of the previous 15 attacks (including Rafiq Hariri's murder) appear to be Israeli-directed. Separately, UN Rep Geir Pedersen told us that he, too, was worried on this point: both GOL officials and Hizballah representatives were already asking him whether the UNIIIC would dare reject a request for help in the Majzoub killings. End summary.

AN ATTACK WORTHY OF JAMES BOND

2. (S) In a one-on-one meeting with the Ambassador on 6/14, Murr said that, based on "very strong" evidence, he was nearly convinced that Israel had, using sophisticated techniques and local surveillance, killed the PIJ activist "Abu Hamze" Majzoub and his brother in Sidon on 5/26. Two Lebanese suspects in LAF G-2 (military intelligence) custody had confessed to the crime, and the G-2 recovered much evidence. The investigation is still on-going, and "who knows?" where it will lead, Murr said.

3. (S) Perhaps demonstrating his knack for hyperbole, Murr said that two vehicles had been prepared in Israel to carry out the operation, with pieces smuggled across the Blue Line via Ghajjar. One vehicle had a specially equipped door made in Israel, complete with a transmitting device, an explosive device, and a closed-circuit camera. Packed with explosives, this car was parked outside the Majzoub residence in Sidon. A van was parked about 1000 meters away, out of the line of sight. This van was outfitted to receive the television images and transmit signals to an overhead, circling Israeli

plane. When those in the van saw by the television footage that the Majzoub brothers were approaching the booby-trapped car, they transmitted verification to the plane. The Israelis in the plane used signals to detonate the car bomb. Murr could not explain to the Ambassador why such James Bond-like techniques were required, when the operation could have been accomplished via the van and without the plane.

14. (S) Murr said that a raid on the suspects' homes turned up much more evidence, including side tables with encrypted computers hidden in the framing that could be used to transmit and receive messages from Israel. There were hidden maps and documents that linked the plotters to Israel. Murr shook his head when the Ambassador asked whether such evidence could be planted or invented; "I doubt it," he said, citing the amount of material recovered. Murr said that he expected more arrests and the discovery of additional plots. Most likely, he said, previously unsolved assassinations "from years ago" would now be understood.

G-2, NOT HIZBALLAH, RESPONSIBLE
FOR PROGRESS IN SOLVING THE CASE

15. (S) The Ambassador said that it struck him as too convenient that, within a couple of weeks of the Majzoub brothers' deaths, suspects had been arrested and the plot uncovered. How could the GOL be so good on this case and so feckless on the previous 15 bombings, assassinations, and assassination attempts? Murr said that he shared the same feeling of disgust and had ordered G-2 chief Georges Khoury to make a breakthrough on one of those 15 cases within 30 days. But, Murr said, "we have to face reality": On the previous cases, Syria and Hizballah did not want the truth to be known. When Hizballah and Syria combine forces to hide

the evidence, it is hard to solve the cases. In the case of the Majzoubs, Hizballah and Syria did not provide any interference. The Ambassador asked about the rumors that Hizballah, in fact, had investigated the case and turned over the suspects to the G-2. Murr insisted that the G-2 had been responsible for the progress, with Hizballah's only assistance confined to standing aside ("better than trying to block us").

16. (S) Murr warned the Ambassador that he expected the Majzoub case to have far-reaching, and very negative, political ramifications. It will make the debate regarding the disarmament of Hizballah that much harder, he said, with Hizballah using the Majzoubs' deaths to reinforce its arguments about the need for Lebanon to have an independent "resistance." "I want to deal with Hizballah as a militia, not as a resistance," Murr said, grumbling that the Israelis seem to be in cahoots with Hizballah. "All those air violations, now this -- no wonder Hizballah has popular support for its weapons!"

WHAT WILL THE UNIIIC DO IF ASKED
TO INVESTIGATE THE MAJZOUB DEATHS?

17. (S) Murr also worried that the alleged Israeli fingerprints on the Majzoub assassinations would start to raise questions about whether Syria is really the culprit behind the other 15 attacks, including the one Murr survived on 7/12/05 and Rafiq Hariri's 2/14/05 murder. "Like it or not, there's now a big question mark," he said. Already, Murr claimed, there are people in Lebanon who are referring to the UNSCRs passed since Gebran Tueni's murder on 12/12/05, which opened up the possibility of the UNIIIC to look into other attacks since October 2004. "What will Brammertz do if he is asked officially by the GOL to look into this case?" Murr indicated that the cabinet might not be able to resist such pressure from the Shia, pro-Syrians, and "even Aoun." The Ambassador said that, if he were Brammertz, he would respond that it is clear that the GOL is making progress by itself and that UNIIIC limited resources should go primarily toward the Hariri investigation and secondarily to the other

attacks where the GOL has proven unable to make progress. Murr said that Brammertz would have to look to see if there are any connections between the Majzoub killings and any of the other 15 attacks.

¶8. (S/NF) In a separate 6/14 meeting, Geir Pedersen, the UN Secretary General's Personal Representative for Lebanon,

SIPDIS

echoed Murr's concerns about the possible implications on the UNIIIC of the Majzoub brothers' deaths. He said that his office has already been contacted by GOL officials, including Foreign Minister Salloukh, and Hizballah contacts (likely Wafiq Safa, Pedersen's usual interlocutor), to ask about getting the UNIIIC involved in the Majzoub investigation. Their questions, Pedersen said, were particularly pointed: would the UNIIIC dare reject a request for help? The Ambassador repeated his argument that, yes, the UNIIIC might well be justified in rejecting a request for help, given the forensics advances that the G-2 claims to have made on its own. The Ambassador also reminded Pedersen that PIJ is a terrorist organization, and there is no equivalence between the Majzoub brothers and Rafiq Hariri.

COMMENT

¶9. (S/NF) If the Israelis did knock off the Majzoubs, they probably seized a target of opportunity and of course did not expect to be caught. Given the apparent closeness between Abu Hamze Majzoub and Hassan Nasrallah, Israel would have gotten a "two-fer" -- attack on PIJ and Hizballah simultaneously. But, with suspects reportedly caught and now singing, this operation, if it is Israeli-directed, could easily damage our political agenda here. Certainly, as Murr points out, the timing is abysmal from the perspective of those trying to make the point that Hizballah is a militia and that Lebanon has no need of "resistance."

¶10. (S/NF) Moreover, the UNIIIC, which under Brammertz' leadership has tried to affect a professional and politically neutral stance, will be in a bind if assistance is requested.

After repeated criticism about foreign interference in Lebanon, the UNSC will be in an awkward position if the GOL asks for some kind of statement condemning these attacks. As the primary suspect is a Druse, this operation might further increase the risk to Walid Jumblatt, if the suspect can be

shown to have relations with Jumblatt.

¶11. (S/NF) Worse, if any evidence turns up that links (however tenuous the arguments) the suspects to any of the other 15 recent attacks, then the popular perception that Syria was the primary culprit behind them all -- from Marwan Hamadeh (10/01/04) to Gebran Tuani (12/15/05) -- will start to evaporate. We worry in particular that pro-Syrians or Hizballah sympathizers within the Lebanese security or judicial services will latch onto George Hawi's anti-Israeli past or Samir Kassir's Palestinian heritage to build a case that Israel killed them, too. We question whether Murr should so confidently reject the notion that convenient evidence can be planted.

¶12. (S/NF) But something about this whole case still strikes us as a bit odd. Murr and others claim that the evidence of Israeli fingerprints in the Majzoubs' deaths is overwhelming. Maybe it is -- they certainly are trying to make that case. But, at least so far, the public and political reaction in Lebanon and beyond has been much more muted than one would expect if the Lebanese truly had an open-and-shut case of Israeli targetted killings in Lebanon. Earlier this year, after the Israelis shot and killed someone the Lebanese claimed was a shepherd boy who had inadvertently wandered across the unmarked Blue Line, the Foreign Minister summoned the P-5 Ambassadors to pound on his coffee table, and the Prime Minister ranted to one and all by phone. Editorials and television commentators thundered condemnations. Al-Jazeera had a field day. Maybe all of

this is to come, but its curious absence now -- when Lebanon seems to have a stronger case of Israeli interference -- makes us wonder if there is less to the "Israelis-did-it" argument than the Lebanese wish us to believe.

FELTMAN